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Memorandum

To: Co-Chairs Clyde Burmaster & Barry Weinstein, MD

From: Economic Development Subcommittee Chair Hector Titus

Re: May and June, 2005 meetings

Date: June 24, 2005

The Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Economic Development Subcommittee met May 20 and June 17, 2005 at the University at Buffalo Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth. Present for the May meeting were subcommittee members Titus and Sheffer. Present for the June meeting were subcommittee members Titus, Weinstein, Sheffer, and Witul.

Small Business Assistance Website

ENRP Administrator Tod A. Kniazuk gave an update on the small business assistance website. He met with the Western New York delegation to the New York State Legislature in an effort to fund the project (full funding is \$25,801). As a result of the meeting, Assemblymember Robin Schimminger put in a request in that amount through the Economic Development Committee, which he chairs.

Conbrio will not begin work on the design and development of the site until funding is in place, but will meet their original two month deadline once it has begun. In the meantime, our Outreach Committee made up of members of the project's steering committee has contacted (or attempted to contact) all 60 agencies to build awareness for the site and Conbrio's subsequent contact to confirm their data. Our Writing Committee is also at work, assembling and producing the written material for the glossary, frequently asked questions, helpful documents, and summary pages. The Marketing Committee will commence its work as we begin the design phase. So, while we await funding, we are more fully developing the site's content and methods for raising awareness and use in the community.

It is also becoming apparent that an opportunity exists to leverage the members of the steering committee to work on other small business initiatives following the launch of the site. In fact, several of them have suggested that they remain together to work on programmatic initiatives or to choose a pilot site for multi-agency assistance. The Subcommittee will continue to work with the steering committee and will have recommendations ready as the time approaches for their next project. As one example, Subcommittee Chair Titus suggested that we might put together a directory of small businesses that can be linked to our site. Subcommittee Member Sheffer noted that our Regional Economic Development Database contains firm information for businesses with 20 or fewer employees, and so we already have a base for the project.

Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS)

Sheffer gave an update on the REDS. The cluster work being done through the University at Buffalo Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth and Jim Allen is nearing completion, with only a few of the sector professionals engaged yet to return their work. Once those are in, the process of “weaving” the cluster and strategy pieces together will not take long. It should be noted that this cluster initiative is not the same one as the Erie County Industrial Development Agency’s contracted effort, although the two will be complimentary. That effort is not yet completed and the REDS will move forward without its completion.

Buffalo Niagara Cultural Tourism Initiative (BNCTI)

Sheffer also updated the Subcommittee on the BNCTI. Leslie Zemsky has agreed to chair the Advisory and Oversight Council; a choice that Sheffer commended. Funding for the BNCTI has been slowed as the foundations have spent several months providing immediate and transitional assistance in the wake of the Erie County budget crisis in order to keep the cultural “alive.” They are being encouraged, however, to develop BNCTI implementation on a parallel track so as not to slow it down too much.

Electronic (Smart) Permitting

Simply put, the Institute has taken the effort as far as they can. What is needed is the okay from Erie County to take the site live, which can then be done in two to three weeks. No additional funding will be required to take the site live, despite the fact that the county’s contract with the Institute expired in April, 2005. Once activated, the site is scheduled to be transferred to Erie County,

although Subcommittee members wondered about the county's ability to effectively manage the site in light of their decreased staffing. Nevertheless, the Subcommittee believes the site should go live as soon as possible.

The Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Economic Development Subcommittee requests approval for a letter to be sent to Erie County Executive Joel Giambra requesting the county to take action to implement the electronic permitting website by taking the project live as soon as possible.

Other Topics

Other topics discussed included the Replacement Power legislation which to date has not yet been passed by the New York State Assembly, Niagara County's manager form of government, and the Erie County budget situation.